

a man improves his property and thereby increases the amenities, not only for himself and his family but for the whole neighbourhood, the more he is punished. On the other hand, if he neglects his property, he gets a premium on it; and that is to be the basis on which the Government are to see that local administration is carried on. We may say that we will not trouble about a local income tax, but other countries have found that that is the best way of raising income. Surely instead of being based upon the assessable rateable value of a house the tax should depend upon a man's income. In that way we should get nearer to what is fair for us all. Incidentally, a far better way than choosing the rateable value of property would be to consider again what this House at one time accepted, namely that the rate should be levied upon the site value and not upon the improved, built-up property. I should like to see that principle applied."

MR. ARTHUR SKEFFINGTON (Labour, Hayes and Harlington) said: "If local government must be reformed—the sort of reform which I and everyone else have been

advocating—it must be on a sound, simple financial basis. It is disquieting and discouraging that the Government have not brought forward alternative rating proposals. I agree with the right hon. and learned Gentleman the Member for Montgomery (Mr. C. Davies) and with the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Lewisham, South (Mr. H. Morrison) that at any rate one ought to examine as an alternative or additional source of income the rating of site values. That system, as the right hon. Member said, at any rate does not have the feature of our present rating system of penalising the thrifty and encouraging the profligate. If a man adds a garage or small room to his house, the valuation of the house is increased, but if he allows it to deteriorate as, in extreme cases, a slum landlord does, the valuation goes down. That system is crazy. I had hoped that if the Government really intended to make local administration more independent, they would have found a new source of independent revenue, and the rating of site values is at least worthy of examination."

Richard R. Stokes, M.P.

The Cause for Land Value Taxation has lost a great political champion in Richard Stokes whose death was reported in the National Press on 4th August, 1957. He was aged 60. Thought to be recovering after a car accident he had a relapse which proved fatal.

The son of a barrister, R. R. Stokes was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge. He saw active service in the 1914-1918 War, and was then Chairman of Ransomes & Raper Limited for 27 years.

Labour Member for Ipswich since 1938 he was made Minister of Works in the last Labour Government and Lord Privy Seal.

He was a close associate of the United Committee, consulting them many times when he was engaged in propaganda for the rating of site values which was foremost of his political interests. The apathy in his own Party for this reform did not prevent him from using every opportunity to drive it home in the House of Commons, particularly at Question Time.

A valuable addition to the literature of the Movement was the *Rating of Site Values*, a pamphlet he wrote in 1955 and which the Labour Party published. In forthright and unequivocal terms he marshalled his arguments, and by anticipating the many stock objections of opponents presented a comprehensive statement of the case suitable as an introduction to those of any or no political persuasion. On the justice of the proposal Mr. Stokes had this to say, "Everything we do to improve the social order, every increase in production, puts up the value of land. Unless we tackle the land question first, we shall create a growing obstruction to our own efforts by having to pay ever-increasing rents to owners. The longer the delay, the more we shall have to pay each time before we

can get on with the next move. Meanwhile, we pour more and more wealth into their pockets.

"We talk loosely about nationalising the land, but do those who do so really understand what they mean or what would be involved? For instance, it would be crazy to pay the landlords for something which the community created and the landlords did not. There is all the difference in the world between compensating owners of created wealth, when for example nationalising the railways, and compensating the land owners for land values which the community created."

Our condolences go out to his relatives and close friends.

V.H.B.

From Lord Douglas of Barloch.

Dick Stokes earned for himself a distinctive position in the House of Commons by his persistency in advocating the causes to which he was devoted and his unfailing good humour and absence of self-seeking. These qualities won him the regard even of those who disagreed with him.

By contact with Charles Crompton, for many years Treasurer of the United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values, with whom he was associated in business, he became convinced in the early nineteen-twenties of the truth of Henry George's proposals. He became and remained a sincere and devoted advocate of his plan throughout his life. It was for the sake of this principle that he espoused political life and ultimately became a Member of Parliament.

He immediately became a member of the Land Values Group of the Parliamentary Labour Party and soon became its secretary. He was indefatigable in seeking for opportunities to advance this policy, and his cheerful optimism in face of disappointment or discouragement was an inspiration to his colleagues by whom he will be deeply missed.